

Anarchists

on

Anarchism

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The Role of the Anarchists

We know that in politics there is no useful and honest practice possible without a theory and without a clearly determined goal. Otherwise, inspired as we are with the largest and most liberal feelings, we might end up with a reality diametrically opposite to those feelings: We might begin with convictions that are Republican, Democrat, and Socialist—and finish as Bismarckians or as Bonapartists.

—Michael Bakunin, *Federalism, Socialism, and Anti-Theologism*, 1867

This revolution is not only a theoretical conception: it is the nature of things. It is the development of the current situation that will drive it. However, if the situation is the principal...lever of the revolution, the... intelligent and appropriate intervention of the party that possesses the theoretical conception of this revolution is not for that reason a less important factor. Hence, we must not wait for the revolution to fall from the sky but we must prepare it within the limits of the possible. Above all, we must ensure in this way that the revolution does not turn anew to the advantage of the governing classes.

—Workers' Federation of the District of Courtelary, 1880

Our task is that of “pushing” the people to demand and to seize all the freedom they can and to make themselves responsible for providing for their own needs without waiting for orders from any kind of authority. Our task is that of demonstrating the uselessness and harmfulness of government, of provoking and encouraging by propaganda and action al kinds of individual and collective initiatives.

—Errico Malatesta, *l'Adunata dei Refrattari*, December 26, 1931

All that individuals can do is elaborate, clarify, and propgate ideas corresponding to the popular instinct and contribute their incessant efforts to the revolutionary organization of the natural power of the masses; . . . the rest can and should be done by the masses themselves.

—Michael Bakunin, *The Paris Commune and The Notion of the State*, 1871

For the triumph of the revolution against the reaction, it is necessary that, in the atmosphere of popular anarchy that will constitute the life and energy of the revolution, unity of thought and revolutionary action should find an organ. That organ must be the secret and

universal association of the International Brothers. The only thing that can make a well-organized society is to aid in the birth of a revolution by spreading among the masses ideas corresponding to their own instincts and by organizing, not the army of the revolution—the army must always be the people—but a sort of revolutionary staff, composed of devoted, energetic, intelligent, and above all, sincere individuals of the people, not ambitious nor vain, capable of serving as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the instincts of the people.

—Michael Bakunin, *Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organization of International Brothers*, 1868

The first condition of victory by the people is agreement among the people or organization of the people's forces.

—Michael Bakunin, *Science and the Urgent Revolutionary Task*, 1870

We do not want to "wait for the masses to become anarchists before making a revolution," the more so since we are convinced that they will never become anarchist if the institutions that keep them enslaved are not first violently destroyed. And since we need the support of the masses to build up a force of sufficient strength to achieve our specific task of radical change of the social organism by the direct action of the masses, we must get closer to them, accept them as they are, and from within their ranks seek to "push" them forward as much as possible. That is, of course, if we really intend to work for the practical achievement of our ideals and are not content with preaching in the desert for the simple satisfaction of our intellectual pride.

—Errico Malatesta, *Umanita Nova*, November 25, 1922

The international does not have and never will have any other power but the great power of opinion, and it will never be anything else but the organization of the natural action of the individuals upon the masses. In contrast, the State and all its institutions—the Church, the University, the courts, financial science, the police, and the Army—demand the passive obedience of their subjects.

—Michael Bakunin, *Protestation of the Alliance*, 1871

The task of the conscious minority is to profit from every situation to change the environment in a way that will make the education and spiritual elevation of the people possible, without them there is no real way out.

—Errico Malatesta, *Umanita Nova*, September 30, 1920

First of all, the insurrection must proceed among the peasantry and urban workers themselves. Only then can it count on success. But no less necessary for the success of the insurrection is the existence among the insurrectionists themselves of a strong, friendly, active group of people who, serving as a bond between the separate families and having clearly determined how to formulate the demands of the people, how to avoid various traps, how to secure its victory, are agreed on the means of action. It is clear, moreover, that such a party must not stand outside the people but among them, must serve, not as a champion of some alien opinions worked out in isolation, but as a more distinct, more complete expression of the demands of the people themselves.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Must We Occupy Ourselves...?*, 1873

The masses, in the future revolution, will constitute, in a sense, the infantry of the revolutionary army. Our anarchist groups, specialized in technical needs, will form, so to speak, the artillery, which, though less numerous, is no less necessary than the infantry.

-Siegfried Naght, *speech at the Congress of the Anarchist International, Amsterdam, 1907*

The social revolution can only be the work of the masses. But all revolutions must be necessarily accompanied by acts that, by their character—technical in some ways—can only be the deed of a small number, the hardest and most trained fraction of the proletariat in motion. In each neighborhood, each city, each region, our groups will form, in the revolutionary period, so many little combat organizations, each destined to accomplish the special and delicate measures that the great mass is often incapable of.

-Amadee Dunois, *speech at the Congress of the Anarchist International, Amsterdam, 1907*

The masses will make the insurrection but cannot prepare it technically. Men, groups, and parties are needed who are joined by free agreement, under oath of secrecy, and provided with the necessary means to create a network of speedy communications to keep those concerned informed of all incidents likely to provoke a widespread popular movement.

-Errico Malatesta, *Umanita Nova*, August 7, 1920

But, you will say, to start a revolution and bring it to its conclusion one needs a force that is . . . armed. And who denies this? This armed force, or rather the numerous armed revolutionary groups, will be performing a revolutionary task if they serve to free the people and prevent the re-emergence of an authoritarian government. But they will be tools of reaction and destroy their own achievements if they are prepared to be used to impose a particular kind of social organization or the program of a particular party.

-Errico Malatesta, *Fede!*, November 25, 1923

The socialist aim . . . consists in making every worker fully conscious of what he wants by awakening in him an intelligence that corresponds to his instinct, for when the intelligence of workers rises to the level of their instinct, their will crystalizes and their might becomes irresistible.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Politics of the International*, 1869

Everything depends on what the people are capable of wanting. In past insurrections the people, unaware of the real reasons for their misery, have always wanted very little and have achieved very little. What will they want from the next insurrection? The answer, in part, depends on our propaganda and the effort we put into it.

-Errico Malatesta, *Il Programma Anarchico*, 1920

Instinct, left to itself and not yet transformed into conscious, clearly defined thought, is easily misled, perverted, and deceived. And it is impossible for it to rise to self-awareness without the aid of education, of science—the knowledge of affairs and of men—and of political experience. All this is lacking so far as the proletariat is concerned.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, 1871

What do the masses lack to be able to overthrow the prevailing social order so detestable to them? They lack two things—organization and science—precisely the two things that constitute now, and always have constituted, the power of governments.

-Michael Bakunin, *Protestation of the Alliance*, 1871

It is evident that during the preparatory period that we are going through today, we must concentrate all our efforts on propagandizing the idea of expropriation and collectivism. Instead of relegating these principles to a corner of our brain, so as to speak to people only of so-called politics (which would prepare their minds for a revolution eminently political,

perceptibly obliterating its economic character, the only thing that can give it the necessary force), we must, to the contrary, always and in all circumstances, expose these principles, demonstrating the practical implication, proving the necessity: We must make all efforts to prepare the popular mind to accept these ideas.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Report to the Jura Workers' Federation*, 1879

To imagine that a government can be overturned by a secret society, and that that secret society can take its place, is an error common to all the revolutionary organizations that sprang to life in the bosom of the republican middle class since 1820. And yet facts abound that prove what an error it is . . . For it is not secret societies nor even revolutionary organizations that can give the finishing blow to governments. Their function, their historic mission, is to prepare men's minds for the revolution, and then when men's minds are prepared and external circumstances are favorable, the final rush is made, not by the group that initiated the movement, but by the masses of the people altogether outside of the [secret] society.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Government*, 1880

What matters most of all is that the people—all people—should lose the sheeplike instincts and habits with which their minds have been inculcated by an agelong slavery, and that they should learn to think and act freely. It is to this great task of spiritual liberation that anarchists must especially devote their attention.

-Errico Malatesta, *Il Risveglio*, December 14, 1929

No handful of people, however energetic and talented, can evoke a popular insurrection, if the people themselves, through their best representatives, do not achieve the realization that they have no other way out of a position with which they are dissatisfied except insurrection. Consequently, the business of any revolutionary party is not to call for insurrection but only to pave the way for the success of the imminent insurrection—that is, to unite the dissatisfied elements, to promote the acquaintance of the separate units or groups with the aspirations and actions of other similar groups, to help the people define more clearly the true causes of dissatisfaction, to help them define more clearly their actual enemies, removing the mask from those enemies who hide behind some decorus disguise, and finally, to contribute to the elucidation of the nearest practical goals and the means of their realization.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Must We Occupy Ourselves...?*, 1873

The social revolution is not a mere political change: It is a fundamental economic, ethical, and cultural transformation. A conspirative minority or political party undertaking such a work must meet with the active and passive opposition of the great majority and therefore degenerate into a system of dictatorship and tyranny.

-Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?*, 1928

Once such a great natural phenomenon [as a revolution] has begun . . . separate individuals are powerless to exercise any kind of influence on the course of events. A party perhaps can do something—far less than is usually thought—and on the surface of the oncoming waves, its influence may, perhaps, be very slightly noticeable. But separate small aggregations not forming a fairly large mass are undoubtedly powerless—their powers are nil. . .

-Peter Kropotkin, *letter to the workers of Western Europe*, April, 1919

Isolated, sporadic propaganda, which is often a way of easing a troubled conscience or simply an outlet for someone who has a passion for argument, serves little or no purpose. Such propaganda is forgotten and lost before it can have an effect. What is needed is continuity of effort, patience, coordination, and adaptability to different surroundings and circumstances.

-Errico Malatesta, *I'Agitazione*, September 22, 1901

In the next revolution, those who think most quickly to set an example, those who have the most enthusiasm, the most forcefulness, the most vitality, the most elan—it is those whom the crowd will follow.

-Jean Grave, *Anarchiy, Its Goal, Its Means*, 1899

Mediocrity of thought destroys noble efforts, grand passions, and immense devotions.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Studies*, 1892

If for the life of the [trade union] organization and for the needs and wishes of its members it is absolutely necessary to negotiate, to compromise, and to establish doubtful contracts with the authorities, so be it; but this must be done by others, not by anarchists, whose role is that of pointing to the insufficiency and precariousness of all improvements that can be obtained under a capitalist regime, and of pushing the struggle always towards more radical solutions.

-Errico Malatesta, *Pensiero e Volonta*, April 16, 1925

General rule: The anarchist who accepts the role of a permanent and paid for functionary of a union is lost for propaganda, lost for anarchism! He becomes henceforth obliged to those who pay him and, as these are not anarchists, the paid functionary, forced to choose between his conscience and his interest, either will follow his conscience and lose his job, or follow his interest and then, good-bye anarchism!

-Errico Malatesta, *speech at the Congress of the Anarchist International, Amsterdam, 1907*

We can have relations of cooperation with non-anarchist parties so long as we share a need to fight a common enemy and are unable to destroy him unaided, but as soon as a party takes power and becomes the government, the only relations we can have with it are those between enemies.

-Errico Malatesta, *Pensiero e Volonta, August 1, 1926*

[After the revolution] anarchists will have the special mission of being the vigilant custodians of freedom, against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority.

-Errico Malatesta, *Il Risveglio, December 14, 1929*

We must, in every way possible, and in accord with local conditions and possibilities, encourage action by workers' associations, cooperatives, groups of volunteers—in order to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian groups, new governments, combating them with violence if necessary but, above all, by rendering them useless.

-Errico Malatesta, *Il Risveglio, December 14, 1929*

In all circumstances, it is the duty of the Socialists, and especially of the Anarchists, to do everything that can weaken the State and the capitalist class, and to take as the only guide to their conduct the interests of Socialism; or, if they are materially powerless to act efficaciously for their own cause, at least to refuse any voluntary help to the cause of the enemy, and stand aside to save at least their principles—which means to save the future.

-Errico Malatesta, *Anarchists Have Forgotten Their Principles, 1914*

We are reformers today in so far as we seek to create the most favorable conditions and a large body of enlightened militants so

that an insurrection by the people would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. We shall be reformers tomorrow, after a triumphant insurrection and the achievement of freedom, in that we will seek with all means that freedom permits—that is, by propaganda, example, and even violent resistance against anyone who would wish to restrict our freedom—to win over to our ideas an ever-greater number of people. But we will never recognize the institutions; we will take or win all possible reforms with the same spirit that one tears occupied territory from the enemy's grasp in order to go on advancing, and we will always remain enemies of every government, whether it be that of the monarchy today or the republican or bolshevik governments of tomorrow.

—Errico Malatesta, Pensiero e Volonta, March 1, 1924

Organization, action in common, is indispensable to the development of anarchism and it does not contradict our theoretical premises. Organization is a means, and not a principle; but it is self-evident that, to be acceptable, organization must be constituted in a libertarian manner.

—Georges Thomar, speech at the Congress of the Anarchist International, Amsterdam, 1907

The Anarchist Groups

Anyone who tells you that anarchists don't believe in organization is talking nonsense. Organization is everything and everything is organized . . . But there is organization and organization. Capitalist society is so badly organized that its various members suffer. . . There is organization that is painful because it is ill, and organization that is joyous because it means health and strength . . . the organization built on compulsion, which coerces and forces, is bad and unhealthy. The libertarian organization, formed voluntarily and in which every member is free and equal, is a sound body and can work well. It is the kind of organization the anarchists believe in.

-Alexander Berkman, *What is Communist Anarchism?*, 1928

With anarchy, he who knows teaches to those who do not know: he who is the first to conceive of a thing puts it into practice while explaining it to those he wants to enlist, but there is no temporary abduction, no authority, there is nothing but equals in mutual aid, according to their respective talents, abandoning nothing of their rights, nothing of their autonomy. The surest means of making anarchy triumph is to act as an anarchist.

-Jean Grave, *Dying Society and Anarchy*, 1893

We are sworn enemies of all domination, be it collective or be it individual. . . . We do not want any leaders and we will not tolerate any. An idea, even coming from an individual, if it is a good idea and is accepted, immediately becomes collective property, in order that our ideas will not carry personal labels. That is our custom, our law.

-Michael Bakunin, letter to Lodovico Nabruzzi, January 3, 1872

An anarchist organization must [allow for] complete autonomy, and independence, and therefore full responsibility, for individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it useful to come together for cooperative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfill one's pledges and to take no action contrary to the accepted program. On such bases then one then introduces practical forms and suitable instruments to give real life to the organization. Thus the groups, the federation of groups, the federation of federations, meetings, congresses, correspondence committees and so on. But all this must be done freely, in such a way as not to restrict the thought and the initiative

of individual members, but only to give greater scope to the efforts which in isolation would be impossible or ineffective.

-Errico Malatesta, *Il Risveglio*, October 15, 1927

At present, in revolutionary action as in work, the collective is to replace individuals. You should know that when you are organized you are stronger than all the Mazzinis and Garibaldis in the world. You will think, live, and act collectively, which, however, will in no way hinder the full development of the intellectual and moral faculties of every individual. Every one of you will contribute his own abilities, and in uniting you increase your value a hundred-fold. Such is the law of collective action.

-Michael Bakunin, *A Circular Letter To My Friends in Italy*, 1871

There are matters in which it is worth accepting the will of the majority because the damage caused by a split would be greater than that caused by the error; there are circumstances in which discipline becomes a duty, because to fail in it would be to fail in the solidarity among the oppressed and would mean betrayal in the face of the enemy. But when one is convinced that the organization is pursuing a wrong course, which threatens the future and makes it difficult to remedy the harm done, then there is a duty to rebel and to resist even at the risk of provoking a split.

-Errico Malatesta, *Pensiero e Volonta*, February 16, 1925

For the State, centralism is the appropriate form of organization, since it aims at the greatest possible uniformity in social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favorable moment and on the independent thought and action of its supporters, centralism could but be a curse, by weakening its power of decision and systematically repressing all immediate action.

-Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, 1938

We must not let the enemies of the people believe that we take one or the other of us for idols.

-Louise Michel, speech, 1881

We follow ideas, not men, and rebel at this habit of embodying a principle as a man.

-Errico Malatesta, speech at the Berne Congress of the International, 1876

It is the leader who must think for all; it is the leader who is charged with the duty of watching for the well-being and liberty of the mass in general and the individual in particular; the result being that there are millions of brains among the mass that never think. . . . The masses remain passive . . . There should be no mass; there should be a league of thinking individualities, united among themselves for the attainment of certain ends.

-Ricardo Flores Magon, *Anarchist Revolutionary Almanack*, 1914

The International Workingmen's Association can become an instrument of the emancipation of humanity only when it has first emancipated itself, and that will happen only when it has ceased dividing into two groups—the majority as blind tools, and the minority of learned savants who do all the directing—and when every member of the Association has become imbued with the science, philosophy, and politics of socialism.

-Michael Bakunin, *Protestation of the Alliance*, 1871

At the moment of action, in the midst of struggle, roles are naturally distributed in accordance with everyone's aptitudes and judged by the whole collective; some direct and command while others execute commands. But no function remains fixed and petrified, nothing is irrevocably attached to one person. Hierarchic order and advancement do not exist, so that the executive of yesterday may become the subordinate of today. . . . In such a system, power, properly speaking, no longer exists. Power is diffused in the collective and becomes the sincere expression of the liberty of everyone. . . . This is the only true human discipline.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, 1871

I believe, as I have always believed, in liberty. Liberty understood in the sense of responsibility. I consider discipline indispensable, but it must be self-discipline moved by a common ideal and a strong feeling of comradeship . . . For me, discipline has no other significance than the concept one has of responsibility. I am the enemy of the discipline of the barracks, which leads to brutality, to horror, and to mechanical action . . . and which is the refuge of cowards. In our organisation . . . the members accept and carry out the decisions made by the committees, which are proposed by comrades elected to discharge these responsibilities. . . . If we knew that we are opposed by hesitant ones, then let us speak to their consciousness and to their self-

esteem. In this manner, we would make them good comrades.

-*Buenaventura Durruti, interview with Emma Goldman, 1936*

In order to establish a certain coordination in action, one which, in my opinion, is necessary among serious people striving toward the same goal, certain conditions are required: a definite set of rules equally binding upon all, certain agreements and understandings to be frequently renewed. Lacking all that, if everyone is to work as he pleases, even the most serious people will find themselves in a position whereby they neutralize one another's efforts.

-*Michael Bakunin, The Printed Word and Revolution, no date.*

The army of Makhnovist rebels was organized on the basis of three fundamental principles: voluntary service, election of officers, and self-discipline. Voluntary service signifies that the army was composed only of revolutionary combatants entering it of their own free will. The election of officers means that the commanders of all the parts of the army, the members of the general staff and of the council, and thus all the persons occupying important posts in the army had to be elected or accepted by the rebels of the different units or by the whole of the army. Self-discipline signifies that all the rules of discipline of the army were drawn up by committees of rebels, then validated by general meetings, and were rigorously observed under the responsibility of each rebel and each commander.

-*Peter Arshinov, History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1928*

The soldier of the revolution will not fight effectively if he is converted into a machine without a soul under the rigid discipline of a code that never speaks of right or duty, but only of obedience and punishment. The old formulas are unacceptable, because they were not dictated by a people defending themselves.

-*Proclamation of the CNT (National Confederation of Labor of Spain), 1936*

We want to be the militia of liberty, but not soldiers under uniform. Armies prove dangerous to the people; except for the popular militia protecting the public libraries. Militia, yes! Soldiers, never!

-*Proclamation of the CNT, 1936*

"This is our career and our triumph!"

There is a general rule to the effect that those who want to spread the revolution by means of propaganda must be revolutionists

themselves. One must have the devil within him in order to be able to rouse the masses; otherwise, there can be only abortive speeches and empty clamor, but not revolutionary acts.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, 1871

[The revolutionist] must have within himself the revolutionary passion; he must love liberty and justice to the point of wanting to contribute to their triumph by his efforts, to the point of making it his duty to sacrifice for them his rest, his well-being, his vanity, his personal ambition, and also often his personal interests.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Program of the Fraternity*, 1865

One who casts his lot with an advanced party must be prepared to spend a number of years in prison, and he need not grudge it. He feels that even during his imprisonment he remains not quite an inactive part of the movement which spreads and strengthens the ideas that are dear to him.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 1899

I might live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by accident. Our words—our lives—our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.

-Bartolomeo Vanzetti, *statement after being sentenced to death*, 1927

Spies: There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today! Fischer: Hurrah for anarchy—Engel: Hurrah for anarchy! Fischer: This is the happiest moment of my life! Parsons: Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America? Let me speak, Sheriff Matson! Let the voice of the people be heard!

-Chicago anarchists, *just before being hanged for "conspiracy" in the haymarket bombing*, November 11, 1887

All of us, without exception, are obliged to live more or less in contradiction with our ideals; but we are anarchists and socialists because, and insofar as, we suffer by this contradiction and seek to make it as small as possible. In the event of adapting ourselves to

the environment, we would of course lose the desire to change it and would become ordinary bourgeois; bourgeois without money, perhaps, but for all that, bourgeois in our actions and intentions.

-Errico Malatesta, *I'Anarchia*, August, 1896

The necessary and primary condition of any success whatsoever among the peasants and the workers is full renunciation of any signs of nobility, the lowering of one's material circumstances almost to the level of the milieu where one intends to act. And one must work, do actual work, which each worker and each peasant can understand precisely as work.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Must We Occupy Ourselves...?*, 1873

Only those whose former way of live, whose previous deeds are wholly of a character that merits the faith of the peasantry and workers will be heeded by them; and this will be only the activists of the peasantry itself and those who will wholeheartedly surrender themselves to the people's affairs and prove themselves, not with heroic deeds in a moment of enthusiasm, but with all their previous ordinary life; those who, having cast off any shade of nobility in life, now enter into close relations with the peasantry and urban workers, tied by personal friendship and confidence. Finally, once the need for unification of the people's awakened forces is recognized, then the conclusion seems unavoidable that the only possible place is among the peasantry and workers themselves. Such a way of life serves as direct proof to one's associates that professed convictions are not simple verbiage but a matter of one's whole life.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Must We Occupy Ourselves...?*, 1873

If a man born and raised in a bourgeois environment wishes sincerely and without phrase-mongering to become a friend and brothers of the workers, he must renounce all the conditions of his past existence, all his bourgeois habits, break all ties of feelings, vanity, and mind which bind him to the bourgeois world, and turning his back on that world, becoming its enemy, and declaring ruthless war upon it, plunge completely and unreservedly into the worker's world.

-Michael Bakunin, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, 1871

I shall continue to be an impossible person so long as those who are possible remain possible.

-Michael Bakunin, letter to Ogarov, June 14, 1868

I cannot enjoy what I am eating if I think that there are people dying of hunger; . . . If I am enjoying myself, my spirit is saddened as soon as I recall that there are unfortunate fellow beings still languishing in jail; if I study, or do a job I enjoy doing, I feel remorse at the thought that there are so many brighter than I who are obliged to waste their lives on exhausting, often useless, or harmful tasks. Clearly, pure egoism, others call it altruism, call it what you like. But without it, it is not possible to be real anarchists.

-Errico Malatesta, *Umanita Nova*, September 16, 1922

It is often said that anarchists live in a world of dreams to come and do not see the things which happen today. We see them only too well, and in their true colors, and that is what makes us carry the hatchet into the forest of prejudices that besetss us.

-Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*, no date.

To be an anarchist it is not enough to recognize that anarchism is a beautiful ideal; in theory everyone would agree, including sovereigns, leaders, capitalists, police, and I imagine even Mussolini himself. But one must want to struggle to achieve anarchism, or at least approximate it, by seeking to reduce the power of the state and of privilege, and by demanding always greater freedom, greater justice.

-Errico Malatesta, *Pensiero e Volonta*, May 16, 1925

To the daring belongs the future.

-Emma Goldman, *The Blast*, January 15, 1916

I despise you. I despise your order; your laws; your force-propelled authority. Hang me for it!

-Louis Lingg, *on being sentenced to hang*, 1886



Biographical Notes

MIKHAIL ALEXANDROVITCH BAKUNIN, a Russian aristocrat, was born in 1814. An active revolutionary in the 1840s in Paris—where he met and instantly disliked Karl Marx—Bakunin was an energetic participant in the 1848 revolution. Transferring his activities to the East, he was captured in an insurrection in Dresden, sentenced to death in two countries, and finally imprisoned in the Czar's dungeons. Exiled to Siberia, he escaped and resumed his revolutionary activity in Europe, especially Switzerland and Italy, and participated in unsuccessful insurrections in both France and Italy. He was a member of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International) and the spokesman for the "anti-authoritarian" wing. His expulsion from the organization (and that of his close friend James Guillaume) by Karl Marx and his supporters brought about the rapid collapse of the International. Bakunin died in Switzerland in 1876. Always on the move as a revolutionary agitator, Bakunin had neither time nor patience to complete a book, although he wrote voluminously. The only sizable work of Bakunin available in English is a compendium by the Russian Anarchist G. P. Maximoff, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1953), and the excellent collection edited by Sam Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972). Bakunin's *God and the State* is available in a Dover Publications reprint (New York, 1970). Michael Bakunin, a biography by E. H. Carr, is published by Vintage Books (New York).

ALEXANDER BERKMAN was born in Vilno (then Russian Poland) in 1870 and emigrated to the United States. At the age of twenty-one, he unsuccessfully attempted to kill Henry Clay Frick, who, as Andrew Carnegie's agent, was directly responsible for the repression of the Homestead, Pennsylvania, strike. Upon his release from prison fourteen years later, Berkman resumed his Anarchist agitation, often in company with Emma Goldman. After various other spells in prison, he was deported with Goldman to Russia in 1919. Berkman fled after the Bolshevik suppression of Kronstadt and committed suicide in France in 1936. His *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* are a classic of prison literature (Schocken). Of his other works, only *What Is Communist Anarchism?* is available, abridged as the ABC of Anarchism (London: Freedom Press, 1968). AK Press (Oakland) has published a collection of his newspaper *The Blast* bearing the same title.

CARLO CAFIERO. 1846-92, was a pioneer in the Italian labor movement. Although a good friend of Engels, Cafiero became a close associate and supporter of Bakunin. He spent his last years in a mental hospital, where he insisted that his window be kept closed in order not to receive more than his fair share of sunlight. The CNT (Spanish National Confederation of Labor) was the Anarcho-syndicalist union, formed in 1910. The largest working-class organization in Spain, the CNT took over the administration of large parts of the country after the 1936 revolution. The FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation) was a pure Anarchist organization within the labor union. Leaders of the CNT-FAI included Diego Abad de Santillan, Garcia Oliver, and Frederica Montseny. Organizational descendants of the CNT still exist, both in exile and underground in Spain. Buenaventura Durruti is famous for leading the Durruti Column of Anarchist militia that fought effectively against Franco and advanced, often ruthlessly, collectivization and expropriation during its military maneuvers. Durruti was killed during the Civil War. AK Press (Oakland) has published a gigantic biography, Durruti.

FRANCISCO FERRER pioneered libertarian techniques in education in Spain. He was executed in 1909 in the repression following an unsuccessful Anarchist insurrection. Ferrer's execution spurred a crisis that toppled the government. His works are unavailable in English. Emma Goldman was born in Russia in 1869 and as a young woman emigrated to the United States. She spent from 1891 to her deportation in 1919 agitating for Anarchism and women's rights. Her advocacy of both led to a number of prison sentences. Exiled to Russia, she was disturbed by the progress of the revolution there and eventually fled with her close comrade-in-arms. Alexander Berkman. Goldman died in 1941 while on a speaking tour of Canada. Her available works include Anarchism and Other Essays, Living My Life (both Dover Publications; New York, 1969 and 1970), and My Disillusionment in Russia (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970). A biography of Emma Goldman, Rebel in Paradise, by Richard Drinnon is published by Beacon Press (Boston, 1970).

JEAN GRAVE was a French shoemaker turned Anarchist propagandist. His book *La Societe Mourante et l'Anarchie* was banned in 1893 for its anti-militarism. Nevertheless, Grave later supported World War I and helped to split the Anarchist movement. None of his work is currently available in English. Haymarket Martyrs Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg, Oscar Neebe, Michael

Schwab, and Samuel Fielden were tried in Chicago on a charge of conspiracy after a bomb was thrown at the police during a labor rally at Haymarket Square. The first four mentioned were executed on November 11, 1887. Lingg committed suicide the day before he, too, was to be hung. The sentences of the other three were commuted after the trial was proved to have been unjust. The bomb-thrower was never definitely identified. The international holiday of May Day (May 1) commemorates the Anarchist victims. Albert Parsons' widow, Lucy Parsons, was one of the founders of the IWW.

PETER ALEXEIEVICH KROPOTKIN was born in 1842 with the title of prince. Despite his youthful position as page to the Czar, Kropotkin's keen sense of morality led him to reject the life of a nobleman. He became a brilliant and successful geographer and finally turned to revolutionary propaganda. Imprisoned, he escaped in 1876, and became active in workers' circles in Switzerland and France (where he was also thrown in prison) and in England. Kropotkin's self-contradicting support for the Allies in World War I split the Anarchist movement. An aged veteran of the revolution, he returned to Russia after the fall of the Czar and died there in 1921. A number of his works are available in paperback, among which the best are Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, edited by Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover, 1970); Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution, edited by Martin A. Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1970); Memoirs of A Revolutionist (New York: Grove Press and Dover); and The Great French Revolution (New York: Schocken Books, 1971). Schocken also publishes In Russian and French Prisons; Extending Horizons Books (Boston) publishes one of Kropotkin's scientific works, Mutual Aid. Benjamin Blom of New York publishes most of Kropotkin's English works in hardback, the most important of which is The Conquest of Bread, which is published in paperback by AK Press (Oakland). A biography, The Anarchist Prince, by George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, is available, also from Schocken Books (New York, 1971).

THE MAKHNOVITSI were peasants organized into a revolutionary militia during the Russian Revolution by Nestor Ivanovich Makhno. The Ukrainian Makhnovitsi successfully combatted the Austro-Hungarian occupying troops and the counter-revolutionary White armies from 1917 to 1920. The Makhnovitsi established a number of Anarchist communes, the first of which was named after the Polish-German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg. The Anarchist experiment in the Ukraine

ended when the Red Army under Trotsky turned against and finally defeated the Makhnovitsi in 1920. Makhno gloomily ended his life in exile in Paris. Peter Archinov and Voline were members of the Makhnovitsi.

ERRICO MALATESTA was born in Italy in 1853. His career as a revolutionary began when he was expelled at age seventeen from the University of Naples and ended some sixty-odd years later, after years of prison and exile, when he died under house arrest in Mussolini's Italy. Malatesta worked as a mechanic-electrician most of his life and did not write for profit. Vernon Richard's compendium, *Malatesta: Lite and Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1965), presents a good sampling of his newspaper articles, pamphlets, and manifestos.

PARAF-JAVAL (1858-1942.) founded an unsuccessful Anarchist "colony" in France and was an active Freemason. He was a prolific pamphleteer and an antimilitarist activist.

FERNAND PELLONTIER (1867-1901) and **EMILE POUGET** (1860-1931) were proletarian journalists and early theoreticians of French syndicalism. They were among the leaders of the labor movement at the turn of the century.

PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON was born in 1809 to a French family of peasant stock. Proudhon was one of the earliest theoreticians of socialism, although he did not advocate the total abolition of private property. He was the first to call himself an Anarchist. Greatly respected by the workers of Paris, Proudhon was elected to the National Assembly after the revolution of 1848, but feared as a revolutionary by the bourgeoisie, he was imprisoned and exiled. By the time he died in 1865, his views had become more conservative. His early work *What Is Property?*, translated by Benjamin Tucker, has been reprinted by Dover Publications (New York, 1970). Doubleday and Company publishes a compendium selected by Stewart Edwards, *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon* (Garden City, N.Y., 1969). Most of his works are unavailable in English.

RUDOLF ROCKER 1873-1958, was a bookbinder and printer who, when exiled from his native Germany, organized Jewish workers in the ghettos of London. Thrown in prison during World War I for his principled opposition to the war, Rocker returned to Germany after peace was established and organized Anarcho-syndicalist unions.

He fled to the United States after Hitler's accession to power. None of his complete works are currently in print, but Root and Branch magazine in Cambridge, Massachusetts, plans to republish his work on Anarcho-syndicalism.

THE WORKERS' FEDERATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COURTELARY was a Swiss workers' association within the Jura Federation, an affiliate of the Anarchist International. The 1880 program of the Courtelary workers was written by Adhemar Schwitzguebel, an engineer.

Anyone who tells you that anarchists don't believe in organization is talking nonsense. Organization is everything and everything is organized . . . But there is organization and organization. Capitalist society is so badly organized that its various members suffer. . . There is organization that is painful because it is ill, and organization that is joyous because it means health and strength . . . the organization built on compulsion, which coerces and forces, is bad and unhealthy. The libertarian organization, formed voluntarily and in which every member is free and equal, is a sound body and can work well. It is the kind of organization the anarchists believe in.

-Alexander Berkman, What is Communist Anarchism?, 1928

I might live out my life talking at street corners to scorning men. I might die, unmarked, unknown, a failure. Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by accident. Our words—our lives—our pains—nothing! The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph.

-Bartolomeo Vanzetti, statement after being sentenced to death, 1927

I shall continue to be an impossible person so long as those who are possible remain possible.

-Michael Bakunin, letter to Ogarov, June 14, 1868

It is often said that anarchists live in a world of dreams to come and do not see the things which happen today. We see them only too well, and in their true colors, and that is what makes us carry the hatchet into the forest of prejudices that besets us.

-Peter Kropotkin, Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal, no date.